

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the

A S S I Z E S

Field in
WARWICK,

April the 1st. 1690.

By *JOHN WILLES, D.D.*

Published at the Request of the High Sheriff
and Grand Jury, for the County of *Warwick.*

L O N D O N,

Printed for B. Sare at *Grays-Inn-Gate* in *Holbourn*, and
Published by *Randal Taylor.* MDC XC.

152-15-4
(4) 314

Imprimatur,

April 23,
1690.

C. Alston.

To the Right Worshipful
THOMAS WAGSTAFFE, Esq;

High Sheriff of the County of *Warwick*;

AND TO

Sir <i>John Mordaunt</i> Bar.	<i>Edward Boughton</i> Esq;
Sir <i>William Boughton</i> Bar.	<i>John Comb</i> Esq;
Sir <i>William Underhill</i> Kt.	<i>Edward Farmer</i> Esq;
Sir <i>John Clopton</i> Kt.	<i>Robert Boyse</i> Esq;
Sir <i>William Eishoppe</i> Kt.	<i>George Fullwood</i> Gent.
<i>William Peytoe</i> Esq;	<i>Thomas Ayleworth</i> Gent.
<i>William Palmer</i> Esq;	<i>John Andrews</i> Gent.
<i>Thomas Keyte</i> Esq;	and
<i>Henry Parker</i> Esq;	<i>William Savage</i> Gent.

Being the Grand Jury at the last Assizes.

Gentlemen,

THO' I was ever averse to the Printing of my
Sermons, and in the very compoſure of them
deſigned them only for the Pulpit, not the Preſs; to be
heard, not read, and have therefore withſtood all Im-
portunities of this nature; yet ſince you are now reſol-
ved not to be denied, and have agreed in your Verdict
againſt

The Epistle Dedicatory.

against me, I must submit, you must be obeyed. And indeed your steady Loyalty in the most difficult Times, your indefatigable Zeal for the Church of England, your affectionate Union and Agreement amongst your selves; and lastly, your particular Respects and Friendship towards my self, make it impossible you should be deny'd. A Church you reverence which doth not affect Novelties and Change, whose Doctrine is peaceable and uniform, and whose very Rites and Ceremonies are solemn and ancient. A Church, which sealed with the Blood of Martyrs, hath out-lived all the Plots of Hell and Rome, and is still the envy of her Enemies. A Church which hath dash'd the hopes and designs of all that hate her, and plainly shew'd that no Weapon form'd against her shall ever prosper. And may you long live to maintain and vindicate the Honour of our Church, to preserve our County in Peace and Union, and suppress Vice and Faction. And if the Publication of this Sermon may conduce any thing to the removing of the Evils we either feel or fear; if it may help to make the Age better, or the Nation happier; if it may make but any one Person either a better Christian, a better Subject, or a better Neighbour, I shall never repent of the Commands that you have laid upon, Gentlemen,

Your most Affectionate and
Obedient Servant,

John Willes.

A
SERMON

Preach'd at the

ASSIZES

Held in

WARWICK.

Amos 3. 6. ——— *Shall there be evil
in a City, and the Lord hath not done it?*

THESE Words are part of the Propheſie of *Amos*, whom God called from among the Herdſmen of *Tekoa*, to be a ſpecial Meſſenger to his People *Iſrael*. For tho' God uſually pitch'd upon Scholars to be his Prophets, and gave extraordinary

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traordinary Endowments to such Persons only as had made the best Improvement of their Natural ones, chose *Moses* for his Prophet, and *St. Paul* for his great Apostle, Men famous in their Generations for their profound Learning; and for a Succession of Prophets, appointed Schools and Seminaries among the Jews, where the Sons of the Prophets were bred up, and with Piety and Learning fitted for the reception of the Divine *Schechinah*: Yet as Princes upon great and pressing occasions, send extraordinary Embassadors with special Credentials; so it pleased God also upon extraordinary occasions, and especially at such times as his ordinary Messengers were unfaithful, when his Priests taught for Hire, and his Prophets prophesied Lies, to inspire a *Balaam*, or a *Saul*; send down the Holy Ghost, as once he did at *Pentecost*, upon illiterate Fishermen; or as it is in the instance before us, call *Amos* from among the Herdsmen of *Tekoa*, to instruct *Jacob* his People, and *Israel* his Inheritance; to teach the *Sanhedrim* Wisdom, and correct the Priests and Prophets at *Jerusalem*. For so it pleaseth God sometimes, to choose the foolish things of the World to confound the wise, and weak things of the World to confound the mighty, and base things, and things that are not,

to

to bring to nought the things that are, that no Flesh should glory in his Presence, 1 Cor. i. 27, 28, 29.

If *Amos* therefore was such an extraordinary Prophet, called by God for this particular Message, and inspir'd beyond the usual Methods of his Gifts and Graces, this may justly raise our Expectations, and make us very inquisitive into the business he was sent about, and the Prophecy he deliver'd.

Now the principal Scope and Design of his whole Prophecy was this: Tho' the Jews had by their Sins provoked God to send many heavy Judgments upon them, yet were they still so stupid and senseless, as neither to be prevailed upon by them to amend their Lives, nor so much as once consider whence those Judgments came. If God sent Fire upon their Cities, they imputed it to a Secret Enemy, or some ill Accident. If God sent Plague or Pestilence among them, that also was ascribed only to some unhappy Contagion, or an infectious Air. If God sent Scarcity or Famine, they looked no further, but that it was for want of Rain. And after this manner all God's Judgments lost their Designs, were far above, out of their sight; God was not in all their Thoughts.

Now when God saw all the Instructions of his Judgments neglected, and the gracious methods of his Providence designed for their Amendment, frustrated; he sent his Prophets to them, to work in them a true sense of their condition; but these also were slighted and despised. So God here tells 'em, chap. 2. vers. 11, 12. *I raised up of your Sons for Prophets, and of your young Men for Nazarites; but ye have made the Nazarites drink Wine, and commanded the Prophets, saying, Prophesie not. And again, chap. 7. v. 12, 13. O thou Seer, go flee away into the Land of Judah, and prophezie there, but prophezie not any more at Bethel, for its the Kings Chappel, and the Kings Court.*

When God saw the Disease grown desperate, and the Patient not enduring so much as the sight of a Physitian, his Judgments neglected and his Prophets abused, God himself awoke like a Giant refreshed with Wine; and to make his Power known, inspir'd one of the Herdsmen of Tekoah, with such knowledge as was wonderful for him; and sent him to assure them all, that their Sufferings were from Heaven, that they were God's Visitation for their Sins, and that nothing but speedy Repentance could prevent their Ruine. This we find delivered here

here in the 4th Chapter, where God thus speaks to them; *I have given you cleanness of teeth in all your Cities, and want of bread in all your Palaces; I have with-holden the Rain from you, and caus'd it to rain upon one City and not another; I have smitten you with blasting and mildew, and sent among you the Pestilence; I have slain your young Men with the Sword, and have taken away your Horses; I have overthrown some of you as Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a Firebrand pluck'd out of the burning.* And again in my Text the Prophet by way of question most emphatically assures them, *That there is no evil in a City, and the Lord hath not done it.* As if he had said, There is no such thing as Chance or Fate in all your Sufferings; *Afflictions do not come forth out of the Dust, nor do troubles spring out of the Ground;* but they are all the effect of God's over-ruling Providence, without whose Knowledge and Appointment not one Hair falls from your Head.

And tho' this be the plain and genuine Sense of these Words, yet because there is a Race of Men in the World that can pervert every thing to a bad meaning, quote God's Word as the Devil did to our Saviour, quite contrary to the Design and Intent of it; and in this very place, from the doubtful signification of the Hebrew
word

word רעוּ *evil*, have made God the Author of their sins. I shall first clear these Words from this blasphemous abuse of them, and then consider them in their proper Sense and Design, as I have already explain'd them.

No sooner had the first Man sinned, but he found out this excuse for himself, to lay the fault upon God, *Gen. 3. 12. The Woman that thou gavest me, she gave me of the Tree and I did eat*: And some of his unhappy Offspring have gone yet further, *and thought God altogether such an one as themselves*, Psalm 50. 21. And whoever hath work'd himself up to this pitch of wickedness, will never be persuaded that God will punish any one for being like him; but, with some of the * Heathens, will be apt to justify his own Villanies, by pretending to follow so great an Example.

* See Lucian in
 ΞΕΝΟΦΩΝΙΣΤΕΣ,
 Terence in
 Eunuchus. Aug.
 gust. de Civ.
 Dei, l. 2. c. 7.
 &c.

To prevent this dangerous and Fundamental Error, God hath taken care throughout all the Scriptures, to work in us true and proper Notions of himself, his Justice, Holiness and Mercy, and make us such a discovery of his own Perfections, as might work us up to the highest degree of Holiness and Virtue. His Laws, which are his revealed Will, are all *holy, just and good*, Rom. 7. 12. and have this one principal

cipal Design in them to make us so too. All the Sanctions of his Laws are so many severe Punishments of Sin, and Rewards of Virtue; and from one end of the Bible to the other, nothing but *Godliness hath the promise of this life, and that which is to come*, 1 Tim. 4. 8. So that to make God the Author of Sin, is to make him act contrary to himself and his own Nature, contrary to his Justice, Holiness and Mercy, which are all essential to him; contrary to his Laws and revealed Will; and in one word, contrary to the Scope and Tenour of all Religion in the World, whether natural or revealed.

Let not any one persuade you therefore that God is the Author of Evil in this Sense, and by his unalterable Decrees compels Mankind to that which himself hates and detests. Far be these things from God, let him be true and just and good, and every Man a Liar. I am sure St. Paul tells the Romans (8. 29.) *That whom God foreknew, those he did predestinate*, and so makes all God's Decrees to Punishments or Rewards to be founded upon his Prescience of our doing good or evil. And then as to God's foreknowledge, that doth not at all destroy our Freedom; God foreknew the sins of the Jews, when by his Prophet he foretold them, and yet
still

still lays the Fault upon them that they had sinned. *Christ knew from the beginning that Judas would betray him, John 13. 27. and yet Judas acted out of his own free choise, and in the bitter Agony of his Soul cried out, That he had sinned in betraying of innocent Blood, Matth. 27. 4.* And indeed to what purpose are all God's Threats and Exhortations, if we are all over-ruled by the fatal Impulse of an irreverfible Decree? To what purpose is God's Solemn Adjuration, *Deut. 30. 19. I call Heaven and Earth to record this day againſt you, that I have ſet before you Life and Death, Bleſſing and Curſing, therefore chooſe Life, that both thou and thy Seed may live? Why doth God tell Iſrael, That his Deſtruction is from himſelf? Hoſ. 13. 9. and ſtill lay the Fault upon the wicked that he is ſo? O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, ſaith Chriſt, how often would I have gathered you as a Hen gathers her Chickens under her Wings, and you would not. And again, Why will you die, O Houſe of Iſrael? Ezek. 18. 31. Why are the wicked puniſhed for thoſe things they cannot help? Why were the Jews cut off for their Unbelief? Or why doth the Apoſtle bid the Chriſtians take care by their Example? Rom. 11. And therefore Solomon amidſt all his Knowledge concludes of this as the moſt certain thing in the*

the whole World, *viz.* That God made Man upright, but they have sought out many Inventions, Ecclef. 7. 29.

Give me leave to add this only, that this cannot possibly be the meaning of the Prophet *Amos* in my Text, unless he contradicts himself, and the whole design of his Propheſie. He is here ſent to reprove the Iſraelites for their ſins, to aſſure them that all the Miſeries they ſuffer'd were God's Viſitation, and that nothing but Repentance could remove them. Now for the Prophet in delivering this Meſſage, to tell them, that not they themſelves, but God by his irreverſible Decrees was the proper Author of their ſins, would be ſo far from working in them ſincere Repentance, that it would be the moſt probable Argument to hinder it, to make them continue in their Sins and in their Sufferings, and ſo he would moſt effectually contradict the whole Deſign of his Prophecy.

And having thus far cleared the Words, I proceed to conſider them in their genuine and natural Senſe, as I have already explained them, *viz.* That there is no Evil, no Calamity or Miſery in a City or Country, which God is not the Author of; and therefore in all the Judgments that befall us, we ſhould learn to ſee God's
C Hand,

Hand, and humble our selves under his Vifitation.

And for a more diftinct and methodical confideration of the Judgments and Calamities that befall a Kingdom for their fins, I fhall fhew,

- I. That when God firft made the World, he fo order'd the connection and dependance of Causes and Effects in the whole courfe of it, as that very many fins naturally produce mischief and sorrow to the Authors of them.
- II. That when this doth not happen, and fins are great and daring, God fometimes breaks through all the courfe of Nature, and difturbes the Order of the World, to make his Power and his Juftice known, to vindicate the Honour of his Providence, and caft Vengeance upon the Sinner.
- III. That even the effects of fecond Causes, and which are produced by an heap of Circumftances, which feem only cafual and accidental, are directed by God to other fpecial Ends and Designs of his Providence, and made the Executioners of his Wrath againft Sinners.

I begin with the first of these, viz. That when God made the World, he so order'd the connection and dependance of Causes and Effects in the whole course of it, as that very many sins naturally produce mischief and sorrow to the Authors of them. And here I would not be understood of the secret Lashes of a wounded Conscience, which usually pursue Sin at the Heels, and where God by his Vicegerent in us, becomes Witness, Judge and Executioner ; for these things being transacted betwixt God and the Sinner, are all in secret from the eye of the World, and cannot be properly designed by the Prophet *Amos* in my Text ; but in open and visible Judgments this is true also. Luxury and Drunkenness naturally tend to impair our Health and our Estates, and either hurry us untimely to our Graves, or else continue us here in Beggary and Want, unpitied and unrelieved. *Sloth and idleness cloath a man with rags, Prov. 23. 21. and if you see the Field of the sloathful, behold its grown over with thorns, and nettles cover the face of it, Prov. 24. 30, 31.* And all this, tho' the usual consequence of the very order of Nature, is properly ascribed to God the Author of it, who, as *David* observeth, *Psalms 107. 34. makes a fruitful Land barren for the wickedness* (for
C 2 the

the idleness) of them that dwell therein. Of Lusts and Debaucheries St. Paul observed in his time, that they were *sins against the Body*, 1 Cor. 6. 18. I am sure they are much more so now; and tho' never any Man hated his own Flesh, yet too many in this Age so far poyson and destroy it, till at last they become loathsome to themselves, and all about them, drop by peace-meals into their Graves, and as far as possible, become living Monuments and Examples, that *the Wages of Sin is Death*. A quarrelsome Temper is continually in Broils and Dangers, and he that is cruel to others *troubles his own flesh*, Prov. 11. 17. So that without a Prophetick Spirit, from the natural course of things we may say with David, Psalm 55. 23. *A blood-thirsty man shall not live out half his days*. An old Lyar is sure to get this by it, that no body will believe him; and an old Knave this, that no body will trust him. He that soweth Discord among others, must not expect to live at home in peace, and the Slanderer usually gets himself a Blot. *Envy is the rottenness of the Bones*, Prov. 14. 30. And of these and many other Sins the Wise Man pronounceth, that they who are guilty of them *sin against their own Souls*. For in all these Cases the Punishment is the natural effect and consequence

quence of the sin, *he sows iniquity, and reaps vanity*, Prov. 22. 8. And what is more natural than for the Harvest to follow Seeding? *He conceives mischief, and brings forth vanity*, saith Job, 15. 35. and *Sin when its finished brings forth Death*, James 1. 15. And what is more natural than that the Birth should follow Conception? Yea, so close is the connection betwixt Sin and Punishment, that in most Languages they have, as in my Text, some one common Name to signifie both of them; and even those Names which signifie them distinctly, are in * Scripture observed to be very often put for one another.

* Zech. 14. 9.
2 Cor. 5. 21.

And thus I have shewed, how in many Cases God's Judgments are the natural consequence of sin, how the very course of things makes the Sinner hated and despised, as if God, when he made the World, had given Commission to all his Creatures in their proper Sphere and Order, to be the Instruments of his Anger, and the Executioners of his Wrath against Sinners.

II. When this doth not happen, and sins are great and daring, God sometimes breaks through all the course of Nature, and disturbs the order of the World, to make his Power and his Justice known, to vindicate the Honour of his Providence,

vidence, and cast Vengeance upon the Sinner. Not that God hath any delight to hurry the World into Confusion, and destroy his own Creatures; but when the Cry of our Sins, like the Voice of *Abel's* Blood, goeth up to Heaven, and the Souls from under the Altar cry loud for Vengeance, it's necessary for God to *make himself known by the judgments that he executeth*, Psal. 9. 16. and by the out-goings of his Power, vindicate the Honour of his Justice. It was this that moved God to open the Windows of Heaven, and bring in a Flood upon the Ungodly. It was this that moved the Lord to rain down Fire and Brimstone out of Heaven. They were the sins of *Corah*, *Dathan* and *Abiram* that provoked the Lord to make the Earth open her Mouth, and swallow them quick into the Pit. When the *Assyrian* Armies reproached the Power of the God of *Israel*, God sent his Angel against them, and in one Night destroyed one hundred eighty five thousand of them. When *Belsazzar* drinking with his Princes, his Wives and his Concubines, in the Vessels of the Sanctuary, which his Father carried from *Jerusalem*, began to magnifie the Gods that himself worshiped, and triumphed over the sacred Vessels of a conquered God; God wrote

wrote his Doom upon the Wall, struck that haughty Monarch with trembling and confusion, and depriv'd him of his Throne, and his Life too the very next Night. And when the Worshipers of *Bel* at *Babylon* thought to get a Victory over the Almighty, and had outlawed *Daniel* and his God; then the Lord broke in with Vengeance upon them, revers'd the Decree, which according to the Laws of the *Medes* and *Persians*, they thought unalterable, and tore in pieces the Presidents and Princes with those very Lions they had prepared for *Daniel*. *Egypt* for a long time lived securely, and her Magicians flourished; but when they began to vie Miracles with *Moses*, and set themselves up against God, then God arose in his Wrath, and to throw contempt upon them, made the Flies, the Lice, and meanest of his Creatures, baffle all their Magick and Inchantments, and forced them to confess before the Face of *Pharaoh*, *That it was the Finger of God*, *Exod. 8. 19.* And when they continued yet in their sins, and still refused Obedience to that God, whom just before they acknowledged; God spake to the Sea and it obey'd him, and overwhelmed them all with so great, so signal, so unexpected an overthrow, that God seems to Triumph in their Destruction; and

and as himself saith, *Got him honour over Pharaoh*, Exod. 14. 17, 18. But because in these Proceedings the Almighty is forced to break through the Harmony and goodness, which himself saw in his own Creation, disturb the very course of Nature, which was made good, and very good, he never makes use of them, but upon great and pressing occasions, when Sinners become daring and impudent, defy God and his Providence, and, as it was in the time of *Elijah*, there is as it were a Contention betwixt Him and *Baal*; or in the Language of an Heathen Poet,

Non Deus interfit nisi dignus Vindice Nodus.

III. God oftentimes by his Wisdom so directs and manages the natural effects of second Causes, and which are produced by an heap of Circumstances, that seem only casual and accidental to other special ends, and designs of his Providence, and makes them become the Executioners of his Wrath against Sinners; and those Arrows of the Almighty, which to the unthinking World seem shot at Rovers, like those of *Jonathan's* to *David*, have a more particular design and signification in them. And here it must be observed, that those things which seem casual to us, cannot be so to God the Author of them. Wives and Children,
Houses

Houses and Lands are a *Gift and Heritage* that cometh of the Lord, *Pfal. 127. 2.* And again, *1 Tim. 6. 17.* Its God that giveth us all things to enjoy. Yea, not a Sparrow falls to the ground, not an hair from your head, without your Fathers knowledge, saith Christ; and the very lot that is cast into the lap hath its whole disposal from the Lord, saith Solomon, *Prov. 16. 33.* If we look upon the History of *Joseph*, his being sold by his Brethren, carried into *Egypt* as a Slave, and there imprisoned by *Potiphar*, we are apt to pity his misfortune; but yet all these black Circumstances had a natural chain and tendency in God's sight to procure his Honour and Promotion: They were these that brought to pass his Prophetick Dream, and made the Sun, Moon and Stars bow down before him. And *Joseph* expressly saith to his Brethren, *Gen. 45. 5.* Be not angry with your selves that ye sold me hither, for God sent me before you to preserve Life. And again, *Gen. 50. 20.* Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is at this day to save much people alive. Tho the Patriarch *Abraham* was banished from *Ur*, for not worshipping the Idols of the *Chaldeans*, as many ancient * Authors tell us, yet because God made use of that Banishment of *Abraham's* to other purposes and designs, the Scripture

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tells

* *Judeth. 5. 6, 7, 8. Joseph. Antiq. 1. 1. c. 7. Hieronymi quest. in Gen. Maimon. More Nev. p. 3. c. 29. & de Cultu Syd. lib. 1.*

tells us, that God called *Abraham* thence, *Gen.* 12. 1. *Acts.* 7. 3. The Jews Crucify'd our Saviour, *Judas* betray'd him, and *Pilate* condemn'd him, and yet it was *God the Father* deliver'd him up for us all, *Rom.* 8. 32. It was Christ offer'd himself, and shew'd Obedience by the things that he suffer'd, *Heb.* 5. 8. it was he laid down his life, and no man taketh it from him, *John* 10. 18. And the Jews and Romans did no more than God's Counsel had before determin'd, *Acts.* 4. 28.

* Origen.
Hom. 35. in
Mat. Deus non
percipit unico
filio, sed pro no-
bis tradidit il-
lum, in aliis lo-
cis, Judas tra-
didit illum, sed
& Satanas
tradidit eum,
principes & se-
niores tradide-
runt eum, sed
non omnes eo-
dem proposito
Deus propter
misericordiam,
&c.

* He that slew *Abab* drew a Bow at a venture; *1 Kings* 22. 34. but God order'd the Arrow to kill *Abab*, as he had foretold by his Prophet. We read in the History of the last Siege of *Jerusalem*, that some Women eat their own sucking Children; and tho this might seem the casual effect of a long War, yet it was far otherwise; and this was one of the Woes that Christ had before pronounced against *Jerusalem*, *Mat.* 24. 19. and is agreeable to *Levit.* 26. 29, 31, 32. & *Deut.* 28. 53. In the History of *Job* the *Sabeans* took away his Oxen, the *Chaldeans* his Camels, a great Wind blew down one of his Sons Houses and kill'd his Children, and yet all these were so peculiarly God's Visitation, that *Job* cries out, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord*, *Job* 1. 21. And so generally

generally doth God over-rule all that which the World calls Chance or Fortune ; that in the Law of *Moses*, when any one had killed another unawares, it's said, *That God deliver'd him into his hand*, *Exod. 21. 13.* and therefore God order'd Sanctuaries for his Refuge. From all which its evident, That God orders the common Accidents of the World to proper ends and designs of his Providence ; and many of those Evils which seem the effects only of Chance, are really designed by God as a Punishment for our Sins. Now in these Cases God's Hand more visibly appears to us.

- I. When Judgments are National and Publick, *Is there any evil in a City, and the Lord hath not done it ?*
- II. When Punishments carry with them a Stamp and Character of the Sin.

I. God's Hand more visibly appears to us in publick and national Judgments. When sins are personal only, and the Infection spreads no farther than their first Author, the state of Religion is not endangered, and God may let the Sinner prosper, and yet secure the Honour of his Providence ; but when the Leprosie is
D 2 spreading,

spreading, and the Contagion dangerous, when Iniquity is established by a Law, and sins also become National, then the Lord makes his Justice known, vindicates the Honour of his Providence, and makes his Judgments National also. Its true, that there are some sins of so deep a Die, that they singly infect a Kingdom; and God orders *the Land to be cleansed of them*, Num. 35. 33. Josh. 7. 11. And as for that Phrase so often used by God in Scripture, *Shall I not visit for these things?* Its scarcely ever used but when sins are national, (as *Levit. 18. 25. Jer. 5. 9. &c.*) If we look upon good and bad Men in their private capacities, their temporal Interests are so intermixt, that its hard to pull up the Tares, and not injure the Wheat also; but as they grow up, so are usually cut down together; and whilst they live here, partake mutually of each others happiness or Misery. We rarely find a Plague or Fire pass by the good Man's Door, but he also is involv'd in the punishment of his ill Neighbours*. *Lot* was driven out of *Sodom*, from his House and Home, not for his own, but their sins; and the same House that fell upon the *Philistines*, kill'd *Sampson* also. One guilty *Jonas* had well nigh drown'd a Ship full of Passengers; and one Religious *Paul* saved all the

* *Sapienter neglectus incesto addit integrum*, Hor. Carm. 3. 30.

the Passengers in another from being drown'd, *Acts* 27. 24. And in this as to particular Persons, *Solomon* is to be understood, when he tells us, *That there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, Eccles.* 9. 2. But the case is far otherwise in Kingdoms and Societies; and tho' the Neighbourhood of the good may protect single persons that are evil, yet if a whole Nation is bad, who shall intercede for them? *Zoar* seems to have been as wicked as *Sodom*, yet the Lord was intreated for it by *Lot*, because it was a little one; but *Abraham* himself could not prevail for *Sodom*. Now National Judgments are so peculiarly the effects of God's Wrath and Anger that in Scripture they are emphatically call'd His, *Ezek.* 14. 21. *When I send my four sore Judgments, the Sword, the Famine, the noysom Beast and the Pestilence.* It was God that gave the Sword a charge against *Askalon* and *Egypt*; it was God that brought Evil upon *Jerusalem*, and gave his People into the Hands of their Enemies. Its he that stops the Clouds from dropping their fatness on us, or sends an Army of Locusts to destroy the Plenty that he had given; yea, even Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapours, Wind and Storm fulfil his Words, *Psalms* 148. 4. 'Tis not Fate nor Fortune that makes a Nation happy

happy or miserable, but the Piety or Wickedness of them that dwell therein. We need not consult the Planets to discover the rise of National Calamities, nothing but sins that are as publick can be the cause of them; and if a Nation fall into Disgrace; its *Sin that is the reproach of any people*, Prov. 14. 34. Its this that makes God remove his Candlestick from a Country, and give his Kingdom to a Nation that will bring forth Fruit.

II. Calamities appear to be from God, tho' in private Persons, when they bear a particular relation to, and oftentimes the very stamp and character of the sin: And as its usual for Malefactors that are punished, to have their Crimes written in a Paper and put upon their Breasts; and the Cross heretofore bore the Inscription of the Faults for which the Persons suffer'd; so God also many times so exactly suits the Punishment to the Sin, that all Men shall say this is Gods Work. Thus when we see the Family of the Sacrilegious come to want and beggary, as it often happens; and not only other Curses, but Poverty also pursue those that thought to enrich themselves with holy things; when we see *Corah's* Priests, for offering strange Fire, consumed immediately with Fire from the Lord; and

and *Jebojakim*, that denied so much as a decent Burial to the Prophet he had murder'd, himself buried with the burial of an Ass, cast forth out of the Gates of *Jerusalem*. When we see *Adonibezek* with his Thumbs and great Toes cut off, as he had used to serve others; and *Haman* hang'd upon that very Gallows he had prepared for *Mordecai*; we must needs cry out, That it is the Lords doing, and its marvellous in our Eyes; and confels with the Angel in the *Revelations*, *That his Judgments are righteous and true*. He that reads the History of *Pharaoh's* being drown'd, must needs reflect upon what he had before done to the Israelitish Infants: And when we find *David's* Concubines abused publicly by his Son, we must needs consider what he had before done to the Wife of *Uriah*. If the Spies bring a false Report of the Land of *Canaan*, after their forty days Search of it, and the People murmur against God, they must all wander Forty Years in the Wilderness, before they come to enjoy it. When the Jews serv'd other Gods, God sent them Captives to the Nations where those Gods were worshiped, *Jer. 5. 19. 2 Chron. 12. 5.* If they walked contrary to God, then God walked contrary to them, *Levit. 26. 23, 24, 27, 28.* and if they neglected to let the Land have

have rest in the Sabbatical Years, as God appointed, the whole Nation is sent to *Babylon* for 70 Years together, that the Land may enjoy her Sabbaths, *Levit. 26. 34, 35, 43. 2 Chron. 36. 21.* So that whereas according to the Hebrew we translate *Lam. 1. 7. The Adversaries mocked at their Sabbaths,* the Septuagint translate it, *They mocked at their Captivity.* If *David's Pride* make him number the People, God punisheth his Pride by sending a Plague upon his Subjects, and so making their number less; and tho' Plagues scatter a secret Infection, and the Pestilence walketh in darkness, yet its so very obedient to God's Commission, that *David* of the three Evils offer'd him, therefore chose that, because *he would fall into the hands of God.* And lastly, it was *David's* own Observation upon God's Proceedings, *Psalms 109. 17. They that love cursing, it shall come unto them, and they that delight not in Blessing, it shall be far from them.* And thus I have shewed, *How God is known by the Judgments that he executeth;* and when the Footsteps of his Providence are so plain and visible, we may easily answer the Question in my Text, *Are there any such evils, and the Lord hath not done them?*

Now

Now as God makes use of a *Lex talionis* in his own Judgments, so he gives particular direction to his Judges after the same manner, for instance, to punish Perjury. *Deut. 19. 16, 17, 18, 19, 21.* If a false Witness rise up against any Man, to testifie against him that which is wrong, and the Judges after diligent Inquisition, shall find that he hath testified falsely against his Brother, then shall ye do unto him as he had thought to have done unto his Brother; so shalt thou put the evil away from among you, thine eye shall not pity, but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. VVe meet with a famous Instance of the execution of this Law in the History of *Susanna*, where the Elders, who by their Perjury would have taken away her Life, are themselves put to Death for it, *v. 62.* According to the Law of Moses they did unto them in such sort as they maliciously intended to do to their Neighbour, and they put them to death. VVhen *Abab* had by the Perjury of two Sons of *Belial* first took away the Life, and then possessed himself of the Field of *Naboth*, God sent his Prophet to him with this Message, *That in the place where Dogs licked the Blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine;* *1 King. 21. 19.* And if Perjury be one of the crying sins of this Kingdom which hath long called for Vengeance,

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geance, and for *which our Land mourns*, Jer. 23. 10. Its much to be lamented that the Punishment of this sin is still so slight and trivial. Why is it thought a lesser Crime to rob a Man of his Estate by two Knights of the Post at an Assize, than to do it by two High-way-men upon the Road? Why is it a lesser Crime to take away a Man's Life by a false Oath, than to do it with a Sword or Dagger? *There are men*, saith David, *whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp Sword*. I can see but this only difference betwixt them, that he that doth it by Perjury is the worse, since, besides the Theft and the Murder, which is the same in both cases, he pawns his Soul, blasphemes God, and with an impudent Face defies his Vengeance, at that very time he is committing of it. I am sure if a *Lex talionis* be ever just, it is in this case; and whatever any one by his Perjury measures to another, it should in the same manner be measured to him again.

And thus I have finished the several Heads I propos'd to discourse of, have discovered the Rise and Origen of all our Evils, whether of Sin, or of Punishment, and shewed that there is no sin but from our selves, no punishment, but from the Lord; and that as this is always true,

true, so especially in National Judgments, *There is no Evil in a City, and the Lord hath not done it.* What remains now but that we a little reflect upon our selves, and see how far we are concern'd in the Subject I have discours'd of.

And hath not Destruction been long hovering over our Heads, and a whole Cloud of Miseries been just ready to break in upon us? Have we not all the while been rather the worse than the better for them; and tho God's Judgments have been amongst us, would not learn righteousness? Oh! that we would at length see God's Hand in all our Sufferings, and humble our selves to God for them; that we would all lay our Hands upon our Mouths, and say with *Daniel, (9.5,6.) We have sinned, we have done wickedly, we have rebelled against thee. O Lord, to us belongs confusion of Face as at this day, because we have sinned against thee.* Oh! that this Nation would consider at least in this their day the things that belong to their Peace, before they be hid from us. If this be the time of God's Visitation, how should we take care that we have nothing left that may offend him? How should we repent of our sins and forsake them, that God also may repent of the evils that he hath brought upon us? Its in vain for us to de-

pend upon God's former kindness and protection over us, and conclude from thence that he will always save us; God never shewed greater kindness to any Nation under Heaven, than he did to the Jews; and yet in all the Histories of the World we never find a Nation that suffered more. Let us not think that our being Protestants, our being of the true Religion, will secure us; so were the Jews; and if God spared not the natural Branches, when their sins called for Judgments, we must not expect that he will spare us. The longer we are suffer'd to abuse God's Mercies, the greater will be our ruine when it comes; and the Ax that hath been long lifted up against us, will by all these delays only fetch the bigger blow. And if we still frustrate all God's gracious designs of Mercy towards us, in staying thus long for our Repentance, and making all the Nations round us become a warning to us; we may justly expect the heaviest Judgments of all, and become our selves a sad example to others. Behold the Fig-tree which Christ himself cursed for want of Fruit; look upon the Vineyard that God himself planted, exposed at last to the Wild Beasts of the Forest, because its Fruit was bad. *Do but go to Shiloh, saith the Prophet, Jer. 7.*

12. 14. and see what God hath done to that place for the sins of it. Go to Jerusalem, and see what Vengeance he hath brought upon his own People; go to the Seven Churches of Asia, and see those once glorious Churches become wast and barbarous; go to Antioch, where the Disciples were first called Christians, and see that place become an Heap of Ruines, without one Christian Church in it*; yea, go to all the Eastern and African Churches, and see there what their Sins have done to them, and then take Christ's Word for it, *That except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*, Luke 13. Behold our Saviour at this time of Tryal now saying to us, as once he did to Jerusalem, O England, England, *how often would I have gathered you as a Hen gathers her Chickens under her Wings, and you would not!* I dread to add the last part of the Verse, *Behold your House is left unto you desolate.*

* Chytraeus de statu Eccles. in Asia, p. 23, 24.

Now one natural effect of Miseries is to make Men serious and considerate, and reflect upon the sins that they have committed. When Joseph's Brethren were in distress, tho twenty years after, they cried out, *We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in that we saw the anguish of his Soul when he besought us, and we would not hear, therefore is this Evil come upon us*, Gen. 42. 21.

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When *Antiochus* was upon his Death-bed, he then remembred the Evils he had done to *Jerusalem*, 1 Macab. 6. 12. And *Joram*, tho a wicked King, yet when he was in distress, cried out, *This Evil is from the Lord*, 2 Kings 6. 33. Let us therefore conclude likewise, that all the Evils we suffer are from the Lord, and that our sins have deserved them. Let us remember now at least in this day of God's Visitation, how often we have slandered and abused the best Church in the World, even then crying out of it, Popery, Popery, when it was well known to be the greatest Bulwark in the World against it.

And if the Lord hath at this time drawn a Sword against us, let us also proclaim War against our sins that caused him; always remembering, that as there is no Evil in a City, but from the Lord, so there is no deliverance but from him also. If therefore the Perjury, Hypocrisie, and other crying sins of this Kingdom, have almost ruined it; and nothing but a Repentance as universal as our sins, can bring deliverance: Let us turn unto the Lord with all our Hearts, and all our Souls, and he will have mercy upon us; so that if our sins have produced a Curse, the Holiness of our Lives may now bring down Blessings on us; and if our sins have made

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us a reproach, our righteousness may at last exalt our Nation. Let us resolve therefore to be religious in good earnest, and by the holiness of our Lives, call louder to Heaven for Mercies, than ever our sins have done for Judgments. Let God's Righteousness go before us in all our Actions, and then shall his Glory be our Reward; then shall God again rejoyce over us to do us good, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against us: Happy are the People that are in such a case; yea, blessed are the People who have the Lord for their God.

F I N I S.